

Waterfowl Hunt Plan

Lewis and Clark National Wildlife Refuge and Julia Butler Hansen Refuge For the Columbian White-tailed Deer

Wahkiakum County, Washington, and Clatsop and Columbia Counties, Oregon

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Table of Contents

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Conformance with Statutory Authorities**
- 3. Statement of Objectives**
- 4. Assessment**
- 5. Description of Hunting Program**
 - A. Areas of the Refuge that Support Populations of the Target Species
 - B. Areas to be Opened to the Public
 - C. Species to be Taken, Hunting Periods
 - D. Justification for Permit (if one is required)
 - E. Procedures for Consultation and Coordination with State
 - F. Methods of Control and Enforcement
 - G. Funding and Staffing Required for the Hunt
- 6. Measures Taken to Avoid Conflicts with Other Management Objectives**
 - A. Biological Conflicts/Impacts
 - B. Public Use Conflicts
 - C. Administrative Conflicts
 - D. NEPA Documentation Cumulative Effects Analysis to Waterfowl
- 7. Conduct of the Hunt**
 - A. Refuge-specific Hunting Regulations (Julia Butler Hansen NWR)
 - B. Refuge-specific Hunting Regulations (Lewis and Clark NWR)
 - C. Additional Stipulations to Ensure Compatibility
 - D. Anticipated Public Reaction to the Hunt
 - E. Hunter Application and Registration Procedure
 - F. Description of Hunter Selection Process
 - G. Media Selection for Announcing and Publicizing the Hunt
 - H. Description of Hunter Orientation, Including Pre-hunt Scouting
 - I. Hunter Requirements
- 8. Hunt Maps**
- 9. Outreach Plan**
- 10. Draft News Release**

Literature Cited

1. Introduction

This waterfowl hunt plan is intended to provide updated guidance for management of waterfowl, coot and snipe hunting opportunities on the Julia Butler Hansen Refuge for the Columbian White-tailed deer (JBHNWR) and the Lewis and Clark National Wildlife Refuge (LCNWR). Both Refuges are managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service). The Service is an agency of the Department of the Interior (DOI), and is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages refuges as part of the National Wildlife Refuge System (Refuge System), which is comprised of more than 150 million acres managed on 555 national wildlife refuges and other units of the Refuge System, plus 38 wetland management districts.

Since the early 1970s, both Refuges have played important roles in the protection, conservation, and management of natural resources in the ecologically significant area of the lower Columbia River Estuary. Both Refuges are located in the lower reach of the Columbia River with lands and waters in southwest Washington (Wahkiakum County) and northwest Oregon (Clatsop and Columbia Counties). The estuary which forms the northern border of Oregon State and the southern border of Washington State begins where the Columbia River meets the Pacific Ocean. This transition from freshwater to saltwater creates an environment that supports unique communities of plants and animals, specially adapted for life at the margin of the sea. Estuarine environments are considered among the most productive ecosystems on earth.

Julia Butler Hansen Refuge for the Columbian White-tailed deer (JBHNWR)

The JBHNWR (Refuge) was established in 1971 to protect and manage habitat for the Columbian white-tailed deer (CWT deer). The Refuge contains over 6000 acres of fields, forested tidal swamps, brushy woodlots, marshes and sloughs along the lower Columbia River in both Washington and Oregon. As the Refuge's name implies, this Refuge was set aside specifically to protect the endangered CWT deer and its habitat. The principle units of the Refuge are the Mainland Unit, Hunting Islands, Price Island, Tenasillahe Island, Crims Island, and Wallace Island.

The goals of the JBHNWR as identified in Chapter 2 of the 2010 Comprehensive Conservation Plan are as follows:

- Provide short-grass fields for the benefit of Columbian white-tailed deer, Dusky Canada Geese, and other grassland dependent wildlife.
- Restore and maintain riparian forests with diverse age and structural features characteristic of the historic lower Columbia River.
- Restore and maintain non-tidal wetlands and sloughs as a mosaic with other Refuge habitat types, especially riparian forest and short grass fields.
- Maintain and protect tidally influenced freshwater wetlands and swamp habitats characteristic of the lower Columbia River.
- Maintain a healthy, sustainable population of endangered Columbian white-tailed deer to promote the recovery of this species.

- Provide and encourage establishment of aquatic habitat conditions that benefit salmonids and other native aquatic species of the Lower Columbia River.
- Gather scientific information (inventories, monitoring, research and studies) in support of adaptive management decisions on the Refuge under goals 1-6.
- Refuge visitors have the opportunity to participate in wildlife observation, hunting, fishing, photography, interpretation, and environmental education.

Lewis and Clark National Wildlife Refuge (LCNWR)

Established in 1972 to preserve and protect the waters of the lower Columbia River estuary the LCNWR (Refuge) encompasses approximately 33,000 acres of vital estuarine habitat, including 18 named islands and numerous sand bars, mud flats, intertidal marshes, and areas of open water in northern Clatsop County, Oregon. The Refuge also includes three small parcels in Oregon on the mainland at Tongue Point, Emerald Heights, and Brownsmead. The Service has acquired 12,167 acres of land within the Refuge's approved boundary and the State of Oregon also owns land within the Refuge boundary. The Refuge preserves much of the wildlife, vegetation and estuarine environment first seen by explorers Lewis and Clark over two centuries ago.

The goals of the LCNWR as identified in chapter 2 of the 2010 Comprehensive Conservation Plan are as follows:

- Protect and maintain natural forested wetland habitats characteristic of the historic lower Columbia River for the benefit of migratory birds, Columbian white-tailed deer, and other native wildlife.
- Protect unique palustrine and estuarine emergent tidal marsh, characteristic of the historic lower Columbia River.
- Protect upland forest characteristic of the historic lower Columbia River for marbled murrelets, bald eagles, forest birds, and a diverse assemblage of other native species.
- Protect riverine and estuarine open water and slough habitats characteristic of the historic lower Columbia River estuary.
- Foster and strengthen partnerships to enhance estuary protection, wildlife and habitat conservation, and public understanding and appreciation of the natural resources in the lower Columbia River estuary.
- Gather scientific information (inventories, monitoring, research, and studies) in support of adaptive management decisions on the Refuge under goals 1 - 6.
- Provide a variety of quality, wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities focusing on Lewis and Clark Refuge's unique solitude and abundant wildlife resources while minimizing negative impacts on wildlife.

2. Conformance with Statutory Authorities

National Wildlife Refuges are guided by the mission and goals of the National Wildlife Refuge System (Refuge System) and the purposes for which individual Refuges were established, as well as other policies, laws, and international treaties. Relevant guidance includes the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966 (Administration Act), as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 (Improvement Act), the Refuge

Recreation Act of 1962, and selected portions of the Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.) and Service Manual.

Refuge Recreation Act of 1962 (16 U.S.C. 460K) authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to administer Refuges, hatcheries, and other conservation areas for recreational use. The Refuge Recreation Act requires that 1) any recreational use permitted will not interfere with the primary purpose for which the area was established; and 2) funds are available for the development, operation, and maintenance of the permitted forms of recreation.

Fundamental to the management of lands within the Refuge System is the Improvement Act; an amendment to the Refuge Administration Act of 1966. The Improvement Act provided a mission for the Refuge System, and clear standards for its management, use, planning, and growth. Its passage followed the promulgation of Executive Order 12996 (April 1996), Management of Public Uses on National Wildlife Refuges, reflecting the importance of conserving natural resources for the benefit of present and future generations of people.

The Improvement Act recognized that wildlife-dependent recreational uses involving hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, and environmental education and interpretation, when determined to be compatible with the mission of the Refuge System and purposes of a Refuge, are legitimate and appropriate public uses of the Refuge System. Compatible wildlife-dependent recreational uses are the priority general public uses of the Refuge System and shall receive priority consideration in planning and management.

Compatibility determinations for both Refuges were documented in Appendices B1 and B6 of the 2010 CCP/EIS document. Waterfowl hunting use was found to be compatible with the primary purposes for each Refuge. Certain stipulations were noted in the compatibility determination to ensure that waterfowl hunting would be a compatible use.

3. Statement of Objectives

The objective of this hunting plan is to provide hunters a quality hunting experience while minimizing negative impacts on wildlife and other wildlife-dependent public uses of the Refuges. It supports the mandate of the Improvement Act that Refuges shall endeavor to provide quality hunting opportunities wherever compatible.

Waterfowl hunting is a traditional use of the Refuges and surrounding area in both Washington and Oregon. This compatible, wildlife-dependent public use provides waterfowl hunters an opportunity to find solitude on the waters and shorelines of Refuge islands. Access to much of the lower Columbia River is by boat-only and remote, which generally limits the number of hunters on the Refuge. Hunters on Refuge islands are generally contained to shorelines, the interiors are largely inaccessible due to the islands' dense vegetation.

The Service completed a combined comprehensive conservation plan and environmental impact statement (CCP/EIS) in 2010. This CCP/EIS outlines the goals, objectives, and implementation strategies, including the proposed continuation of the waterfowl hunting program, at both Refuges with some modifications and additions. Compatibility determinations (Appendices B1 and B6 of the 2010 CCP/EIS) were completed for both Refuge hunting programs. For a complete

review of all Refuge management goals and objectives, see <http://pacific.fws.gov/planning>. This hunt plan is considered a "step-down" management plan of the 2010 CCP/EIS.

The 2010 CCP/EIS outlined an objective for each Refuge's waterfowl hunt program. At LCNWR the listed objective is to maintain opportunities for quality waterfowl, coot and snipe hunting and maintain current waterfowl sanctuary area. At JBHNWR the stated objective is to allow quality waterfowl, coot and snipe hunting on the Refuge.

The hunting program will be conducted to meet these Refuge objectives which will allow for hunting opportunities, managing target species, and assisting the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) with achieving and maintaining state game population objectives. The Service believes these objectives will maintain healthy game populations at levels that will protect the native fish, wildlife, plants and habitats identified in the JBHNWR and LCNWR CCP/EIS, thereby maintaining the biological integrity, diversity and environmental health of the Refuge. This hunting program also supports the mandate of the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act that Refuges provide for priority public uses, including hunting, where compatible. Compatibility determinations can be found in Appendix B of the 2010 CCP/EIS.

4. Assessment

The hunting program will be thoroughly evaluated on an annual basis to determine if the Refuges are meeting their objectives. If there have been no unacceptable impacts to other wildlife populations or to other public use programs, the hunting program would be continued. Any reductions in, or other changes to, the hunt program would be made after evaluation of the program.

All existing and proposed hunting areas are located within Wahkiakum County, Washington or Clatsop and Columbia Counties, Oregon. Hunting of waterfowl, coot, and snipe will be allowed on the Refuges consistent and in accordance with all Washington or Oregon State regulations, except as specifically noted herein.

A. Are waterfowl, snipe and coot populations present in numbers sufficient to sustain optimum population levels for priority Refuge objectives other than hunting?

The Hunt Plan is consistent with the purposes of each Refuge and sound wildlife management principles. The hunt will implement user and administrative stipulations specified in the waterfowl hunting compatibility determinations for each Refuge (Appendices B1 and B6 of the 2010 CCP/EIS). Under this proposal, hunting would be allowed consistent with state regulations. Geese, ducks, coots, and common snipe will be permitted to be taken. Specific species/numbers to be taken and hunting periods will be set by ODFW and WDFW to match adjacent areas open to waterfowl hunting. The shoreline of the Refuge islands as well as the interior sloughs and adjacent slough banks will be opened for hunting.

Both Refuges and the Columbia River estuary provide important wetland habitat that sustains the migratory birds of the Pacific Coast. Both Refuges provide a wintering area and a migration stopover area for waterfowl that nest in Alaska and winter in Oregon, Washington,

and California. Up to 50,000 ducks may be present during the winter (Refuge files, waterfowl surveys). The most common species are mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*), American wigeon (*A. americana*), pintail (*A. acuta*), green-winged teal (*A. crecca*), and greater scaup (*Aythya marila*). In addition, mallards, cinnamon teal (*Anas cyanoptera*), gadwalls (*A. strepera*) and wood ducks (*Aix sponsa*) nest on the Refuges during the spring and summer.

There are typically a minimum of 5,000-10,000 Canada geese along the lower Columbia during waterfowl hunting season (Refuge files, waterfowl surveys). Four of the seven subspecies of Canada geese (*Branta canadensis*) frequent the area, including: western (*moffitti*), lesser (*parvipes*), dusky (*occidentalis*), and Vancouver (*fulva*). Three of the four subspecies of cackling geese use the area, including: Taverner's (*taverneri*), cackling (*minima*), and Aleutian (*leucopareia*). All except the dusky are relatively abundant. For the purposes of state goose hunting regulations, Crims, Wallace, Hunting and the lower river islands are all located in the Northwest Oregon Goose Permit Zone. In Washington State, Hunting and Price Islands are located in Goose Management Area 2. Both these hunt zones have goose hunting restrictions. To minimize the dusky harvest, there is an individual season bag limit of one. Hunters must take a test on subspecies identification and bring all harvested geese to a check station. Hunters that check a dusky lose their goose hunting privileges in the permit zone for the rest of the season. The harvest of dusky geese is regulated by a quota system, whereby the season ends prematurely if the quota is filled. These special regulations, as well as the general regulations pertaining to goose hunting, ensure that goose populations will not be jeopardized by hunting.

There are no survey data on snipe numbers along the lower Columbia. Snipe are observably common (A. Clark, Refuge Biologist, personal comment). The North American population is estimated at 2,000,000 to 5,000,000 (Mueller 2005, USFWS 2000). The estimated harvest for the State of Oregon in 2004 was 900 (USFWS 2004). Very few people hunt snipe in the lower Columbia region (A. Clark, Refuge Biologist, personal comment), therefore, hunting is not likely to have a measurable impact on local numbers of snipe.

Coots are common in the lower Columbia during winter. A total of 1,400 were tallied during the 2007 midwinter waterfowl index survey (Refuge files, waterfowl surveys). The U. S. wintering population is estimated at 2,500,000 to 3,000,000 (Brisbin et al. 2002). Coots are seldom targeted by local waterfowl hunters and the local harvest is thought to be insignificant (A. Clark, Refuge Biologist, personal comment).

B. Is there competition for habitat between target species and other wildlife?

While other species of wildlife including numerous shorebirds, non-target waterfowl species, and mammals such as river otter use the Refuge islands, the hunt zones (shorelines) on the islands comprise a relatively small portion of the available habitat (see Refuge hunting maps). We are aware of no evidence that levels of competition between target and non-target species are outside of acceptable levels.

C. Are there unacceptable levels of predation by target species on other wildlife forms?

Target species (waterfowl, coot and snipe) do not prey on other species at unacceptable levels.

5. Description of Hunting Program

A. Areas of the Refuge that support populations of the target species

Target species of waterfowl are found throughout the Refuges' wetland and riparian areas. Waterfowl extensively utilize the waters of the lower Columbia River both on and off of Refuge lands (numbers vary seasonally). Descriptions of Refuge habitats, and their associated plant and animal species are described in further detail in Chapter 4 of the 2010 CCP/EIS.

B. Areas to be opened to the public

Hunting is currently permitted on Oregon and Washington State-owned waters and tidelands surrounding Refuge island hunt zones. These adjacent waters are all tidally influenced, submerged lands below mean high water. Waterfowl hunting along shorelines and interior sloughs of both Refuges will complement existing state permitted hunting activities. This will resolve potential problems over the exact position of the Refuge boundary and associated enforcement of relevant laws and regulations. The hunt closure along the shoreline of Hunting and Price islands, where it parallels Steamboat Slough, will protect general Refuge visitors from potential conflict of public uses.

Julia Butler Hansen Refuge for the Columbian White-tailed deer (JBHNWR): New areas open to the public for waterfowl hunting within JBHNWR include the Crims Island Unit, which is located in Columbia County, Oregon, and the Service-owned portion of Price Island which is located in Wahkiakum County, Washington (except along the shoreline where it parallels the Steamboat Slough Road). In addition, the plan calls for maintaining previously opened waterfowl hunting opportunities on the shorelines of Hunting and Wallace Islands except along the interior shoreline of Hunting Island where it parallels the Steamboat Slough Road.

Lewis and Clark National Wildlife Refuge (LCNWR): With minor exceptions, the areas open to the public for waterfowl hunting within LCNWR will remain unchanged and include the shorelines and interior sloughs of the Refuge islands under Refuge jurisdiction. The diked portion of Karlson Island and Miller Sands Island, including the partially enclosed lagoon, are closed to hunting to provide a waterfowl sanctuary. In addition, all other Refuge lands outside the designated portions of the Refuge islands are also closed to waterfowl hunting, including the Tongue Point, Emerald Heights and Brownsmead Units.

C. Species to be taken and hunting periods

Target species include: mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*), American wigeon (*A. americana*), pintail (*A. acuta*), green-winged teal (*A. crecca*), greater scaup (*Aythya marila*), common goldeneye (*Bucephala clangula americana*), gadwall (*A. strepera*), wood duck (*Aix sponsa*), redhead (*Aythya americana*), blue-winged teal (*A. Discors*), bufflehead (*Bucephala albeola*), canvasback (*Aythya valisineria*), Canada and cackling geese (*Branta sp.*), coot (*Fulica americana*), and snipe (*Scolopacidae sp.*).

Hunting Season and Bag Limits Overview: Waterfowl populations throughout the United States are managed through an administrative process known as flyways, of which there are four (Pacific, Central, Mississippi, and Atlantic). The review of the policies, processes, and procedures for waterfowl hunting are covered in a number of documents identified below.

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) considerations by the Service for hunted migratory game bird species are addressed by the programmatic document, "Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement: Issuance of Annual Regulations Permitting the Sport Hunting of Migratory Birds (FSES 88-14)," filed with the Environmental Protection Agency on June 9, 1988. The Service published a Notice of Availability in the Federal Register on June 16, 1988 (53 FR 22582), and the Record of Decision on August 18, 1988 (53 FR 31341). Annual NEPA considerations for waterfowl hunting frameworks are covered under a separate Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact. Further, in a notice published in the September 8, 2005 Federal Register (70 FR 53776), the Service announced its intent to develop a new Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for the migratory bird hunting program. Public scoping meetings were held in the spring of 2006, as announced in a March 9, 2006 Federal Register notice (71 FR 12216).

Because the Migratory Bird Treaty Act stipulates that all hunting seasons for migratory game birds are closed unless specifically opened by the Secretary of the Interior, the Service annually promulgates regulations (50 C.F.R. Part 20) establishing the Migratory Bird Hunting Frameworks. The frameworks are essentially permissive in that hunting of migratory birds would not be permitted without them. Thus, in effect, federal annual regulations both allow and limit the hunting of migratory birds. The Migratory Bird Hunting Frameworks provide season dates, bag limits, and other options for the states to select that should result in the level of harvest determined to be appropriate based upon Service-prepared annual biological assessments detailing the status of migratory game bird populations. In North America, the process for establishing waterfowl hunting regulations is conducted annually. In the United States, the process involves a number of scheduled meetings (Flyway Study Committees, Flyway Councils, Service Regulations Committee, etc.) in which information regarding the status of waterfowl populations and their habitats is presented to individuals within the agencies responsible for setting hunting regulations. In addition, public hearings are held and the proposed regulations are published in the Federal Register to allow public comment.

For waterfowl, these annual assessments include the Breeding Population and Habitat Survey, which is conducted throughout portions of the United States and Canada, and is used to establish a Waterfowl Population Status Report annually. In addition, the number of waterfowl hunters and resulting harvest are closely monitored through both the Harvest Information Program and Parts Survey. Since 1995, such information has been used to support the adaptive harvest management (AHM) process for setting duck-hunting regulations. Under AHM, a number of decision-making protocols render the choice (package) of pre-determined regulations (appropriate levels of harvest) which comprise the framework offered to the states that year. The Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission then selects season dates, bag limits, shooting hours and other options from the Pacific Flyway package. Their selections can be more restrictive but cannot be more liberal than

AHM allows. Thus, the level of hunting opportunity afforded each state increases or decreases each year in accordance with the annual status of waterfowl populations.

Each National Wildlife Refuge considers the cumulative impacts to hunted migratory species through the Migratory Bird Frameworks published annually in the Service's regulations on Migratory Bird Hunting. Season dates and bag limits for National Wildlife Refuges open to hunting are never longer or larger than the state regulations. In fact, based upon the findings of an environmental assessment developed when a Refuge opens a new hunting activity, season dates and bag limits may be more restrictive than the state allows.

Refuge Hunt Seasons and Bag Limits: Hunting will be permitted in accordance with state and federal regulations (Table 1 provides an example of annual state hunt seasons for areas within the Refuges) to ensure that it will not interfere with the conservation of fish and wildlife and their habitats. Therefore, the sport hunting of migratory and upland game birds and big game on the Refuge is in compliance with state regulations and seasons, the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966 as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 (16 U.S.C. 668dd-ee), and the Refuge Recreation Act of 1962 (16 U.S.C. 460k).

D. Justification for permit - No Refuge permits will be required.

E. Procedures for consultation and coordination with state

To ensure that hunted wildlife populations are sustainable, the WDFW/ODFW annually reviews the population censuses to establish season lengths and harvest levels. In addition, Refuge staff conducts habitat management reviews of each unit to evaluate wildlife population levels, habitat conditions, and public use activities. Information on the Refuge's hunt program will be published in the state's regulations.

Table 1. Julia Butler Hansen Refuge, Waterfowl Hunting Season Summary for 2011-12.

Species	Dates	Daily Bag Limits	Possession Limits
Ducks (youth hunt)	September 25-26	7 A	14 A
Ducks	October 15-19 & October 22-January 29 except scaup closed October 15-November 4	7 A	14 A
Geese (except brant) Mgmt. area 2A	8 am to 4 pm, Saturdays & Wednesdays only November 12-26 & December 7- January 29 except closed December 25 & January 1	4 B	8B
American coot	October 15-19 & October 22-January 29	25	25
Snipe	October 15-19 & October 22-January 29	8	16

A Daily bag limit: to include not more than 2 hen mallard, 2 pintail, 3 scaup (see restricted dates above), 1 canvasback, and 2 redhead statewide; and to include not more than 1 harlequin, 2 scoter, 2 long-tailed duck, & 2 goldeneye in western Washington.

Possession limit: to include not more than 4 hen mallard, 4 pintail, 6 scaup (see restricted dates above), 2 canvasback, and 4 redhead statewide; and to include not more than 1 harlequin, 4 scoter, 4 long-tailed duck, and 4 goldeneye in western Washington.

Season limit: 1 harlequin in western Washington.

B Daily bag limit: to include not more than 1 dusky Canada goose & 2 cackling geese in Areas 2A & 2B

Possession limit: to include not more than 1 dusky Canada goose & 4 cackling geese in Areas 2A & 2B

Season limit: 1 dusky Canada goose. A dusky Canada goose is defined as a dark breasted (Munsell 10YR, 5 or less) Canada goose with a culmen(bill) length of 40-50 mm. A cackling goose is defined as a goose with a culmen(bill) length of 32 mm or less.

Refuge staff and ODFW / WDFW staff will consult on issues regarding law enforcement and any significant changes in the number or behavior of wildlife. Refuge regulations will be in accord with state regulations.

F. Methods of control and enforcement

The hunting program is managed in strict accordance with all applicable federal laws (50 C.F.R. subchapter C) and to the extent practicable, consistent with applicable state laws.

Refuge and ODFW/ WDFW officers will patrol to ensure hunters are complying with all regulations and restrictions. All Washington hunters who take geese in Special Goose Management Area 2 must have them checked and tagged at a WDFW goose check station. A check station is located at the Julia Butler Hansen Refuge Headquarters.

G. Funding and staffing required for the hunt

Waterfowl hunting on Wallace, Hunting, Price, Crims and lower Columbia River islands would require minimal new infrastructure and no new personnel. Administration of the hunt and annual coordination with the Oregon and/ or Washington game departments would be required as would some law enforcement patrols, however Refuge staff is in place and capable of conducting these additional duties. Revision and printing of the Refuge brochure, updating the Refuge web site and other outreach information would be required at an estimated cost of \$9,000. Base funding is available to cover these costs. Hunting closure signs will need to be placed along the outside of the mainland Refuge dike at JBH NWR and along the adjacent Hunting Island shoreline. Hunting closure signs at Karlson and Miller Sands Islands will need to be surveyed to determine if replacements are needed.

6. Measures Taken to Avoid Conflicts With Other Management Objectives

A. Biological Conflicts/Impacts

An Intra-agency Section 7 Evaluation was completed for this hunt plan. It states that the proposed changes to the hunting programs will have negligible effects on listed and candidate species and is consistent with the Section 7 completed for the 2010 Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) for the Julia Butler Hansen and Lewis and Clark Refuges.

The number of hunters expected to use the shoreline of each island would be small, likely no more than 2-4 parties per day. Waterfowl hunting already occurs on state-owned waters and tidelands surrounding the islands. Expansion of this use is not expected to increase the amount of hunting or boat traffic that occurs in close proximity to the islands but will more likely spread out the use over a larger area.

Julia Butler Hansen Refuge for the Columbian White-tailed deer (JBHNWR): The primary Refuge purpose for the JBHNWR is to maintain the Refuge in optimum condition for the Columbian white-tailed (CWT) Deer. Wallace Island currently supports approximately 20 CWT Deer, Crims Island supports about 25 CWT deer, and Hunting/Price

Islands support around 20 CWT deer. This use would not result in any degradation of the islands in terms of its suitability for CWT deer. Due to the limited number of hunters, limited field time, and the activity being confined to essentially the shoreline, no effects to vegetation are anticipated.

White-tailed deer are quite tolerant of moderate human disturbance. They often live in suburban neighborhoods and city parks, where human presence is nearly constant (Etter 2002, Raik et al. 2006, Harveson et al. 2007). The relatively minor disturbance caused by a few hunters using the shorelines is not expected to have any measurable negative effect on CWT deer.

While the presence of hunters and dogs would cause some disturbance to CWT deer on the islands, this level of disturbance is expected to be minor and inconsequential. There is abundant hiding cover on the islands for CWT deer. Hunters would have no reason to penetrate the island's interior and due to the dense vegetation it is not suitable habitat for waterfowl hunting or walking. The forested areas within the islands have a thick, nearly impenetrable, understory of shrub willow, red-osier dogwood, wild rose, salmonberry, and other shrubs. The forest extends to the shorelines for the most part, so that hunters would only utilize the very edge to construct blinds to hunt outward towards the open water. Hunter's dogs would be expected to stay at the blind or boat, as they are trained to do, except when retrieving birds.

Other species which may be affected include bald eagles, great blue herons and other birds which reside along island shorelines and in riparian vegetation in the Columbia River. Hunting would occur outside of the breeding season for eagles, herons, and other birds, so there would be no effect on their reproduction. Accidental shootings of nongame birds are expected to be negligible. No effects are expected for Columbia River or Refuge fish populations.

Nearby resting and feeding areas will be available for use by waterfowl, deer and other Refuge species that are disturbed. These species would likely move to other areas of the Refuge which are less accessible to the hunters.

Lewis and Clark National Wildlife Refuge (LCNWR): The purposes for the LCNWR have been identified in legal documentation that established and added Refuge lands. Because the Refuge was originally established to preserve important wintering and foraging habitat for migratory waterfowl in the Pacific Flyway, this purpose represents a priority for Refuge management. Protecting nesting and roosting habitat for bald eagles is also a management priority. Refuge authority and management is primarily limited to the islands in the Columbia River; the State of Oregon maintains jurisdiction over the open waters of the Columbia River.

Maintaining hunting opportunities on the LCNWR will complement state permitted activities and resolve potential problems over the exact position of the Refuge boundary that would exist with a waterfowl hunt closure, and associated enforcement of relevant laws and regulations. Hunting is currently permitted on Oregon's state-owned waters and tidelands

surrounding Refuge islands. These adjacent waters are all tidally influenced submerged lands below mean high water (MHW).

The Refuge islands are located in Clatsop County, Oregon. Refuge ownership of the islands is confined to land above MHW with the State of Oregon owning and regulating use of the surrounding tidal and submerged land.

Species which may be affected by a hunt on the LCNWR include bald eagles, great blue herons and a variety of water birds which reside along island shorelines and in riparian vegetation in the Columbia River. No effects are expected for Columbia River or Refuge fish populations.

During the hunting season nearby resting and feeding areas will be available for use by waterfowl, deer and other Refuge species that are disturbed. These species would likely move to other areas of the Refuge which are less accessible to the hunters. On LCNWR two units totaling approximately 1,760 acres are closed to waterfowl hunting to provide a waterfowl sanctuary. The closed areas include the diked portion of Karlson Island and Miller Sands Island, including the partially enclosed lagoon. In addition, all other Refuge lands outside the designated portions of the Refuge islands are also closed to waterfowl hunting, including the Tongue Point, Emerald Heights and Brownsmead Units.

B. Public Use Conflicts

Effects on other public uses are expected to be minimal as the islands of Wallace, Price, Crims Hunting and the lower Columbia River islands are accessible only by boat. During waterfowl hunting season other recreational uses such as kayaking or boating in the Columbia River are at minimal levels due to fall/winter weather.

The 2010 CCP/EIS determined that waterfowl hunting along the shoreline of Hunting and Price Islands, where it parallels Steamboat Slough, poses a potential conflict of public use. Having a hunting zone adjacent to public use wildlife viewing site on the Steamboat Slough Dike Road could place people in danger and/or affect the quality hunting experience. This potential conflict will be eliminated by not permitting waterfowl hunting in this small geographic area.

C. Administrative Conflicts

At this time, no administrative conflicts are anticipated.

D. NEPA Documentation Cumulative Effects Analysis to Waterfowl

A cumulative effects analysis was completed as part of the Julia Butler Hansen and Lewis and Clark NWR's CCP/EIS (approved in September of 2010). As part of this plan, the effects of waterfowl hunting was analyzed on the various alternatives proposed in the plan for both refuges and a detailed summary of the analysis can be found in Chapter 6 of the Final CCP/EIS.

In the CCP we developed alternatives, including the preferred and no action alternatives, as required by National Environmental Policy Act regulations, for each of the following refuges: two alternatives were developed for the Lewis and Clark National Wildlife Refuge and three alternatives were developed for the Julia Butler Hansen Refuge for the Columbian White-tailed Deer. The alternatives included various waterfowl hunting scenarios.

The public scoping phase of the planning process was initiated in September 2006, by announcing the intention to develop a CCP/EIS in the Federal Register. Simultaneously, Planning Update 1 was distributed; requesting scoping comments, and announcing the planning process and four open house meetings that were held in October 2006. In February 2007, a scoping summary and draft vision statement were provided to the public in Planning Update 2. On February 10, 2010, the Draft CCP/EIS was released for public comments. The 48-day public comment period was announced in the Federal Register and in Planning Update 3. Public comments on the Draft CCP/EIS were addressed in the Final CCP/EIS. The Final CCP/EIS was released to the public in September 2010, through our notice in the Federal Register.

7. Conduct of the Hunt (CFR 50, Part 32)

Hunters will be expected to comply with all current applicable state and Refuge regulations. This will be achieved through a combination of printed information, signage, outreach efforts, and enforcement of regulations by state and Refuge law enforcement officers.

A. Refuge-specific migratory game bird hunting regulations (Julia Butler Hansen NWR)

We allow hunting of geese, ducks, coots, and common snipe on the shorelines of refuge-owned portions of Crims, Price, Hunting and Wallace Islands subject to the following conditions:

1. You may possess only approved nontoxic shot for hunting (see §32.2(k)) for the JBH Refuge.
 2. We prohibit hunting along refuge-owned shorelines of Hunting and Price Islands where it parallels Steamboat Slough.*
 3. We prohibit permanent blinds. You must remove all personal property, including decoys and boats, by 1 hour after legal sunset (see §§27.93 and 27.94 of this chapter).*
- (*Indicates a new regulation)

B. Refuge-specific migratory game bird hunting regulations (Lewis and Clark NWR)

We allow hunting of goose, duck, coot, and snipe on the designated areas of the refuge in accordance with state regulations subject to the following conditions:

1. You may possess only approved nontoxic shot for hunting (see §32.2(k)) for the Lewis and Clark Refuge.

2. We prohibit hunting on all exposed lands on Miller Sands Island and its partially enclosed lagoon, as posted. We prohibit hunting inside the diked portion of Karlson Island, as posted.
 3. We prohibit permanent blinds. You must remove all personal property, including decoys and boats, by 1 hour after legal sunset (see §§27.93 and 27.94 of this chapter).*
- (*Indicates a new regulation)

C. Additional stipulations to ensure compatibility

Hunting of geese, ducks, coots, and snipe will be allowed in accordance with state hunting regulations and subject to the following conditions to ensure compatibility:

Julia Butler Hansen Refuge for the Columbian White-tailed Deer

- The shorelines of Wallace Island (approximately 5.8 miles of shoreline and the navigable interior sloughs), Crims Island (Service-owned 5.1 miles), Price Island (Service-owned 0.7 mile) and the Hunting Islands (approximately 6.9 miles of shoreline and navigable interior sloughs) under refuge jurisdiction these areas will be opened to public waterfowl hunting.
- The only exception to the open hunting zone is along the shoreline of Hunting and Price Islands where they parallel Steamboat Slough. Refuge lands in this area would be closed because the hunt zone is directly adjacent to the Steamboat Slough Road Dike. Having a hunt area immediately adjacent to a county road where visitors also come to observe wildlife could lead to conflicting public uses as well as safety issues.
- Geese, ducks, coots, and common snipe will be allowed to be taken. Limits and hunting periods will be set by ODFW and WDFW to match adjacent areas open to waterfowl hunting.
- Refuge staff and ODFW/WDFW staff will consult on issues regarding law enforcement and any significant changes in the number or behavior of wildlife. Refuge regulations will be in accord with state regulations. Refuge and ODFW/WDFW officers will patrol to ensure hunters are complying with all regulations and restrictions.
- Temporary blinds may be constructed, but they must be available to everyone on a first-come, first-served basis.
- Hunters may use dogs to aide in retrieval of birds but dogs will need to be kept under control at all times.
- Only non-toxic shot will be allowed for the hunt.
- Camping, overnight use and fires are prohibited.

Lewis and Clark National Wildlife Refuge

- The shorelines of and interior sloughs of the refuge islands under refuge jurisdiction will be opened to public waterfowl hunting.
- The exceptions to the open hunting zones are the diked portion of Karlson Island and the interior embayment of Miller Sands Island which are closed to waterfowl hunting in order to provide a wildlife sanctuary. In addition, all other refuge lands outside the designated portions of the refuge islands are also closed to waterfowl hunting. These include Tongue Point, Emerald Heights and Brownsmead
- Geese, ducks, coots, and common snipe will be allowed to be taken. Limits and hunting periods will be set by ODFW to match adjacent areas open to waterfowl hunting

- Refuge staff and ODFW staff will consult on issues regarding law enforcement and any significant changes in the number or behavior of wildlife. Refuge regulations will be in accord with state regulations. Refuge and ODFW officers will patrol to ensure hunters are complying with all regulations and restrictions.
- Temporary blinds may be constructed, but they must be available to everyone on a first-come, first-served basis.
- Hunters may use dogs to aide in retrieval of birds but dogs will need to be kept under control at all times.
- Only nontoxic shot will be allowed for the hunt.
- Camping, overnight use and fires are prohibited.

D. Anticipated public reaction to the hunt

Open house style public meetings were held, verbal and written comments were solicited from the public during public scoping for the 2010 CCP/EIS (see Appendix I of the 2010 CCP/EIS for further details on public involvement during development of the CCP). Public comments including those which reference both Refuges' proposed waterfowl hunting program were included in that document and are part of the public record.

Public reaction to the hunt plan is expected to be mixed. There is a consistent desire among certain segments of the population to open more federally managed property, including the Refuge, to hunting. Other members of the public are expected to object on the grounds that a Refuge should be 'a safe haven' for wildlife with no hunting permitted.

E. Hunter application and registration procedures (not applicable)

F. Description of hunter selection process (not applicable)

G. Media selection for announcing and publicizing the hunt

The hunting regulations specific to LCNWR and JHBNWR will be published in the Washington and Oregon Migratory Waterfowl & Upland Game pamphlets. Press releases will be issued by the Refuge to local newspapers including *The Daily News* in Longview, the *Wahkiakum Eagle*, the *Pacific County Press*, the *Daily Astorian*, and the *Chinook Observer* in Long Beach. The Refuge's website will be posted and updated with current hunting information.

H. Description of hunter orientation, including pre-hunt scouting (not applicable)

I. Hunter Requirements

1. Age (if restrictions are imposed by state)

Age restrictions will be in accord with ODFW/ WDFW regulations.

2. Allowable equipment (dogs, vehicles, blinds, sporting arms, ammunition)

Restrictions will be in accord with ODFW/ WDFW regulations and include:

- Weapons must comply with all Washington or Oregon State weapon restrictions.
- Dogs, other than certified assistance dogs, are prohibited on the Refuge except while hunting waterfowl.
- Vehicles must remain on county or state roads or in the parking lot at all times.
- All hunters are required to use only federally approved nontoxic shot while waterfowl hunting. Use or possession of lead shot is prohibited while hunting waterfowl.
- We prohibit permanent blinds. You must remove all personal property, including decoys and boats, by 1 hour after legal sunset.

3. Use of open fires (for cooking, warmth, etc.)

All open fires are prohibited.

4. License and permits

All hunters must have valid Oregon and /or Washington licenses for waterfowl as well as a Federal Duck Stamp.

5. Reporting harvesting

Hunters must fulfill all state reporting requirements.

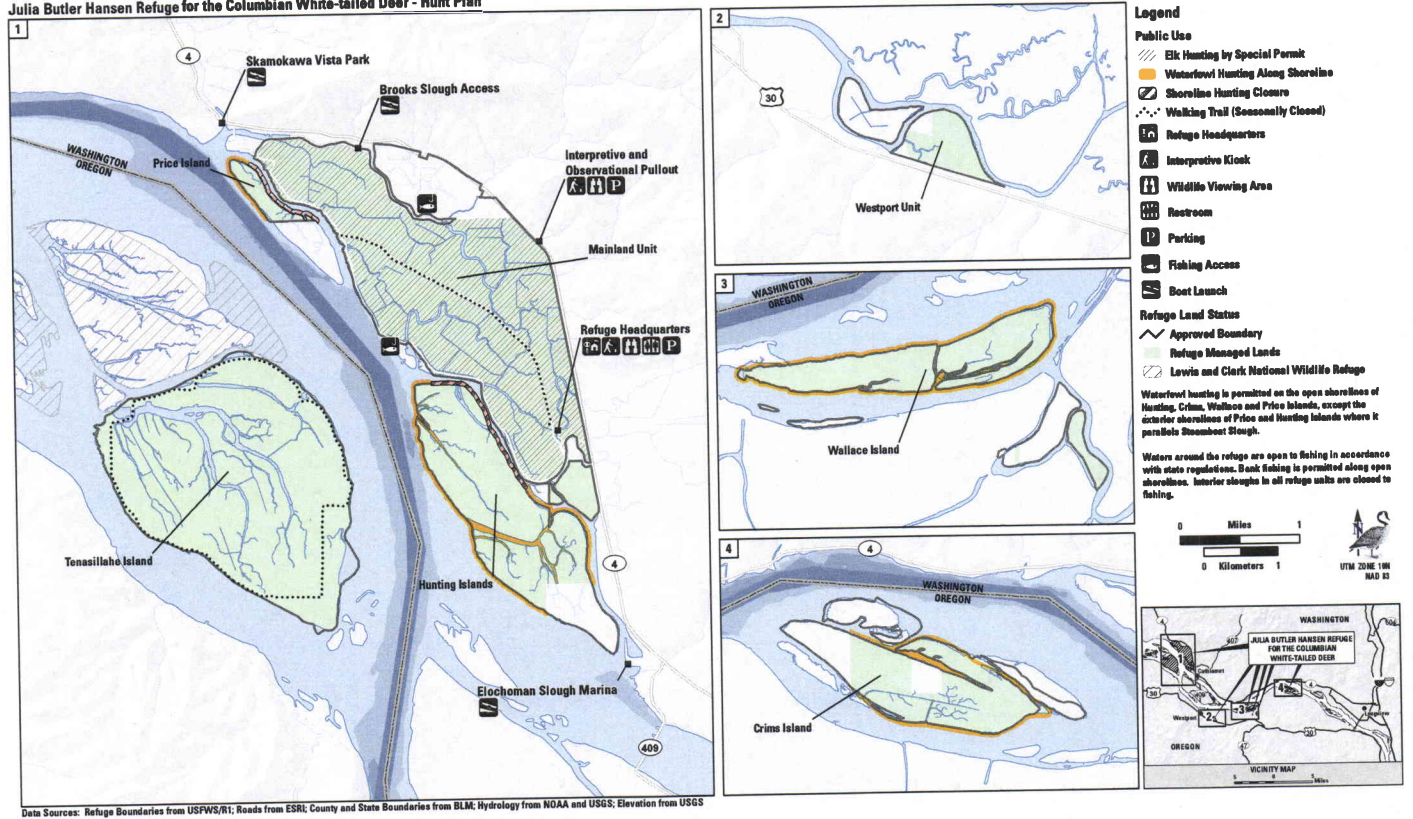
6. Hunter training and safety (if required by state)

Hunters must fulfill all state requirements for training and hunter safety classes.

8. Hunt Maps

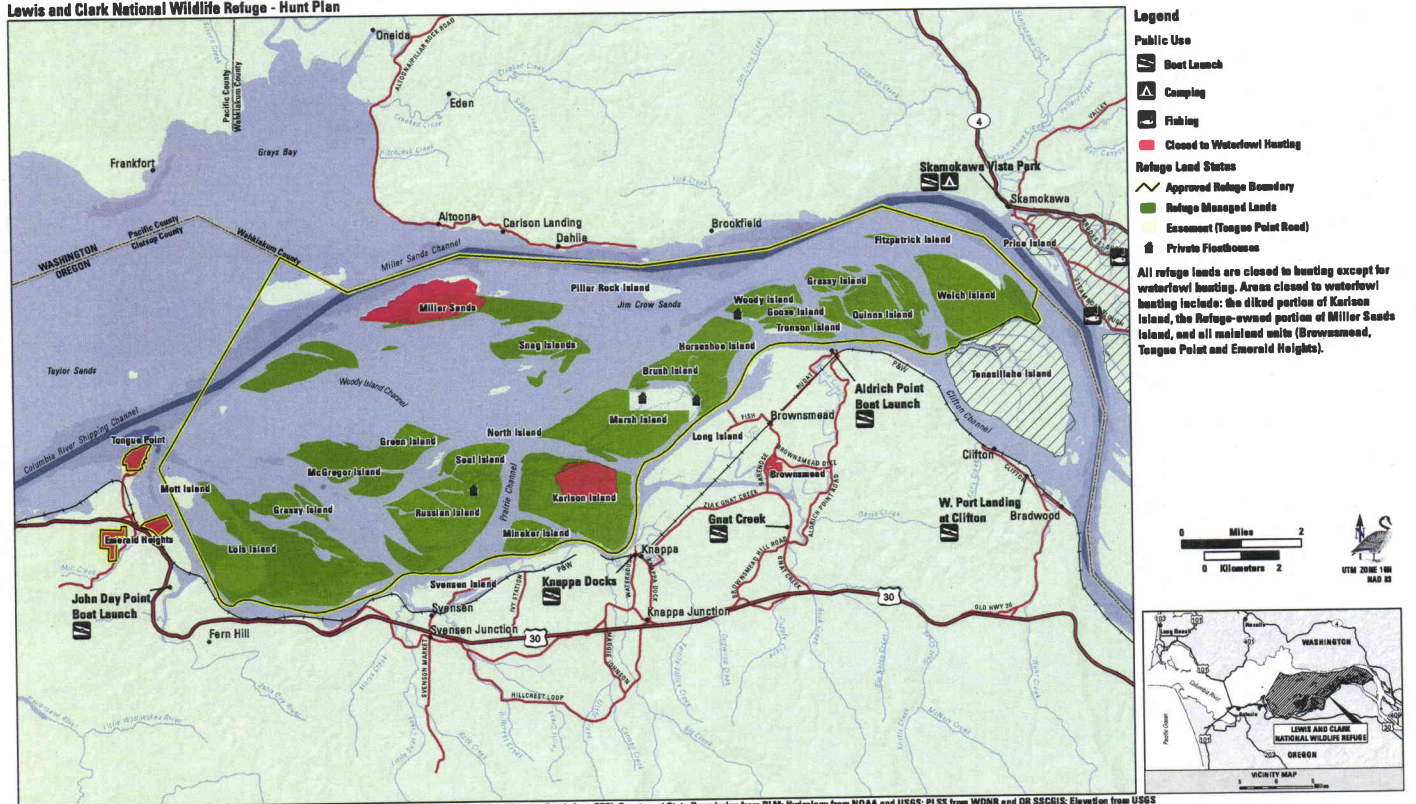
See following pages for maps.

Julia Butler Hansen Refuge for the Columbian White-tailed Deer - Hunt Plan



Data Sources: Refuge Boundaries from USFWS/RT; Roads from ESRI; County and State Boundaries from BLM; Hydrology from NOAA and USGS; Elevation from USGS

Lewis and Clark National Wildlife Refuge - Hunt Plan



Data Sources: Refuge Boundaries from USFWS/RT; Boat Launches from Ducks Unlimited; Railroads from University of Oregon; Roads from ESR; County and State Boundaries from BLM; Hydrology from NOAA and USGS; PLSS from WDNR and OR SSCGIS; Elevation from USGS

9. Outreach Plan

The public had opportunities to be involved in the creation of this plan beginning with the CCP/EIS planning process which was finalized in 2010. This step-down Hunt Plan was posted for public comment on refuge websites and at refuge offices between December 1 -15, 2011. No public comments were received during this time. Consultation with both WDFW and ODFW was completed and minor adjustments to the plan were made.

A. Issue

The Service intends to continue to manage designated areas for waterfowl, coot and snipe hunting on Julia Butler Hansen Refuge for the Columbian White-tailed Deer and Lewis and Clark National Wildlife Refuge.

B. Basic facts about the issue

- The objective for the Refuges is to implement a high quality hunting program.
- Hunting of waterfowl, coot and snipe will be allowed in accordance with state and Refuge-specific hunting regulations during legal hunting seasons and shooting times.
- Hunting is allowed on designated areas of the Refuges during the designated hunting seasons.
- Hunting will be permitted in accordance with state and federal regulations and seasons to ensure that it will not interfere with the conservation of fish and wildlife and their habitats.
- Method of enforcement and control will take place through boundary and hunting signs, information boards, check stations and routine patrol by WDFW/ODFW and Refuge law enforcement officers.
- Biological conflicts will be minimized by use of federally approved non-toxic shot and providing sanctuary areas that are strategically dispersed on the Refuges.
- Measures are taken to avoid biological and public use conflicts.

C. Communication goals

Continue to:

- Solicit input from partners and keep lines of communication open.
- Ensure accurate public information and provide news releases.
- Utilize the Refuges' websites (www.fws.gov/jbh, www.fws.gov/lc), information boards, brochures and flyers to provide current and accurate information.

D. Message

A quality and safe hunting program is managed and maintained on Julia Butler Hansen Refuge for the Columbian White-tailed Deer and Lewis and Clark National Wildlife Refuge with the input and assistance from many partners.

E. Interested parties

State fish and wildlife agencies; tribes; nongovernmental organizations; conservation groups; hunting, fishing, and wildlife observation groups; educators; farmers and ranchers; other federal agencies; members of Congress; state and county representatives; news media; and many members of the public.

10. Draft Press Release

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

News Release

Julia Butler Hansen Refuge for the Columbian White-tail Deer Lewis and Clark National Wildlife Refuge

c/o Willapa National Wildlife Refuge Complex
3888 SR 101, Ilwaco, WA 98624-9707
360/795 3915 www.fws.gov/jbh, www.fws.gov/lc

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Nancy Holman 360/484 3482

The Julia Butler Hansen Refuge for the Columbian White-tailed Deer and Lewis and Clark National Wildlife Refuge will provide opportunities for waterfowl, coot and snipe hunting beginning on XXXX. Take of waterfowl, coot and snipe will be allowed in accordance with Oregon and Washington State and Refuge-specific hunting regulations during legal hunting seasons. Brochures and posted use signs will assist hunters in determining the refuges' hunting area. For further information and Refuge-specific hunting regulations see www.fws.gov/jbh or www.fws.gov/lc or call 360/795 3915.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 544 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 63 fish and wildlife management offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

-FWS-

For more information about the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service,
visit our home page at www.fws.gov

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